

**Brokering Reading Relationships : Teaching Assistant insights into a reading intervention programme**

DANIELS, Karen <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6604-1353>>, BOOTH, Josephine <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4553-6402>> and MONKHOUSE, Jemma

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# Brokering reading relationships: Teaching assistant insights into a reading intervention programme

Karen Daniels , Josephine Booth and Jemma Monkhouse

## ABSTRACT

This article reports on teaching assistants' (TA) perspectives on their role in negotiating reading experiences in ways that positively influenced 7 and 8-year-old children's motivation during the READING with CompreHension programme intervention (REACH Primary). Assessed as not meeting 'age-related expectations' according to national benchmarks, many children in the programme were deemed 'at risk' of underachievement in literacy. REACH interventions were delivered by TAs during one-to-one sessions over a sustained period. As part of our evaluation of REACH, we carried out and analyzed interviews with 14 TAs and eight school leaders, using a variable-oriented approach to case analysis, to identify themes and commonalities across 10 schools. Insights indicated that responsive, flexible, and negotiated pedagogical relationships were established between adults and children, and these may be crucial in effectively supporting children who are experiencing reading difficulties. This highly responsive connection was attuned to the affective experiences of children, developing into a 'brokering' of reading relationships between TAs and children. Furthermore, our data provide evidence to suggest that the relationships established created the reading conditions for a virtuous cycle of increased reading confidence and self-efficacy, which led to children's increased reading motivation and the tendency to engage in reading in wider circles.

## Introduction

Policy context and the notion of 'falling standards'.

Concerns over 'falling standards' in literacy, and in particular the reading and reading engagement of young people, have been a prevalent national and international discourse for decades. Referring to

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Our data were gathered during an EEF trial, as we were external evaluators for the University of Leeds REACH reading intervention programme.

large-scale international assessments such as PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), Reimers et al. (2025) argue that media and political discussions often frame findings in terms of 'causality, highlighting deficiencies in the education system and suggesting what has gone wrong and how it can be rectified' (Reimers et al., 2025, p2).

In the UK, correlations are often drawn between literacy attainment and socio-economic status (SES). In attempts to ameliorate this perceived problem, successive governments in England have implemented policy initiatives aimed at raising standards in reading and English more generally by focusing on children from what are judged to be low SES backgrounds. This includes the National Literacy Strategy (NLS), DFEE (1998), which became compulsory in primary schools. The NLS provided a framework for the teaching of English, with a focus on the direct teaching of skills at text, sentence, and word level. The programme involved strategies such as phonics instruction, guided reading, spelling, and guided writing. However, the NLS was critiqued for its compartmentalisation of incremental and discrete skills, which often led to didactic teaching and children working in 'ability' groups (Hilton, 1998).

The focus on teaching discrete reading skills may be an important strategy as part of a balanced reading programme, but it does not in itself give recognition to reading, or literacy more widely, as a social practice. Street (1995) notes how a focus on skills presents an autonomous view of literacy which positions literacy as 'neutral', divorcing it from the social and cultural contexts in which it occurs. In contrast, by presenting literacy as 'ideological', Street drew attention to the ways in which literacy is inseparable from the values, beliefs, and power relationships that exist within any expression of literacy. Despite concerns that prescriptive methods of teaching reading would be reductive and lead to an increasingly narrow set of pedagogical approaches (see, for example, Dombey, 2010), successive governments, in an effort to find a 'solution' to perceived low standards, (see for example DfE, 2015) have



for English (DfE, 2013) and The Reading Framework (DfE, 2023).

## Reading motivation and reading difficulties

Guthrie et al. (2006), drew particular attention to features of intrinsic motivation in reading which includes a sense of the importance of reading, an interest in the content of what is read, and having a positive experience of reading in itself. The will or motivation to read and the development of reading skills has been seen as a bidirectional relationship (Morgan and Fuchs, 2007; OECD, 2010) where children who are more motivated to read are seen as likely to read more and therefore may make gains in reading skills. Hempel-Jorgensen et al. (2018) refer to a 'virtuous cycle' of increased reading confidence and self-efficacy that increases pupil reading motivation.

The reading motivation of children who have experienced difficulty in learning to read may be particularly negatively affected. Therefore, promoting reading engagement and self-efficacy beliefs may be of particular importance for children who have fallen behind accepted national benchmarks (Ng and Graham, 2018). McBreen and Savage (2020a) claimed that for children at risk of reading difficulties, interventions should include both motivational and cognitive dimensions that support children's goals and self-efficacy beliefs regarding their reading performance. Carefully supporting the self-efficacy of readers who have fallen behind expected standards may therefore be necessary if the bidirectional relationship between the skill and motivation to read is to be secured.

According to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), literacy engagement in individual children involves their motivation, but also decision-making, thinking, effort expenditure, emotion, and the commitment of time. They note that reading interventions often highlight the importance of motivation and self-regulatory strategies in sustaining engagement in reading (Guthrie et al., 2007). Self-monitoring reading strategies have also been seen to provide children with strategies to monitor their progress and overcome difficulties during reading (Paris et al., 1983). Duke and Cartwright (2021) highlight how such active self-regulation related to word recognition, comprehension, and vocabulary strategies can impact positively on reading motivation. McBreen and Savage (2020b) suggest that reading motivation can be enhanced where readers are instructed in self-regulation and where there is a focus on children's reading interests and finding ways of changing children's 'mind set' around their reading difficulty. Drawing on Bandura (1997), McBreen and Savage (2020b) explain how self-efficacy beliefs may increase

persistence; however, the authors highlight how both high-quality reading instruction and supports for motivation can be beneficial and may be necessary for those at risk of reading difficulties.

The understandings outlined in the preceding section acknowledge that learning to read is in part about skills and processes, such as decoding, self-monitoring, comprehension, and engagement, but learning to read is also far from a solitary experience. Reading is a social and cultural practice that requires some kind of reciprocity with others, either in a pedagogical relationship, or with family and peers, or both. It is this element of reading motivation, and the significance of a responsive, flexible, and negotiated pedagogical relationship that we wish to explore further in this article. In particular, we focus on the features of pedagogical approaches that may shift children's self-perception as a reader.

## Background to the REACH programme

Within the policy context around literacy teaching in primary schools described above, and the work of the EEF, Sheffield Hallam University was commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the Reading with Comprehension programme (REACH Primary) developed by The University of Leeds. The intervention was delivered only by Teaching Assistants (TAs). As literacy researchers responsible for the Impact and Process evaluation, we were particularly keen to ensure that our qualitative fieldwork was designed in a way that enabled us to reflect teacher and TA perspectives of the programme. This paper details a subset of findings from semi-structured interviews with the TAs that delivered REACH to pupils identified as needing additional support with reading. In doing so, we highlight the reported positive impact of the programme on pupil reading motivation and present TA viewpoints on what made this a motivating experience for the children they were working with. We suggest that where the programme was successfully implemented, TAs worked in ways that provided a highly effective and reciprocal experience and a personalised approach for the pupils in the schools visited. School leaders were also interviewed as part of this work. However, the evidence presented is overwhelmingly from the TAs' perspectives.

## Theoretical perspectives and outline of the REACH programme

The theory underpinning REACH Primary is described as guided by the two components of the SVoR, that is, word recognition and language comprehension



Understanding to confirm their willingness to take part. Before randomisation took place, parents/carers of pupils who were thought to be suitable for the programme were provided with information sheets covering the aims and objectives of the programme, the data which would be collected about their children, and their right to withdraw their child from the programme and data collection at any time. Separate permission was sought from parents/carers whose children were to be observed in 1:1 reading support sessions as part of the IPE case studies.

## Overview of the implementation and process evaluation

We took a case study approach to the REACH Primary Impact and Process Evaluation. This included gathering rich data with a combination of session observations in schools, surveys, and semi-structured interviews with teachers and TAs. Using stratified random sampling across the five geographic areas of REACH delivery (Lincoln, North East, North West, South Yorkshire, and West Yorkshire), we selected 10 case study schools. Each school was invited to participate in the IPE data collection via email. If a school declined or did not respond to the email invitation, the next school on the list was asked until we had the required number of schools. Schools were not asked to give a reason why they did not wish to take part.

From the 40 intervention schools that took part in the trial, 33% of pupils were classed as FSM according to NDP data. Visits took place when the intervention sessions had been running for 10 weeks. Each visit involved an observation of sessions with TA and pupil, which was followed by a semi-structured interview with TAs and the school leader responsible for coordinating the programme. The interview schedules for these can be found in Appendix 1. In total, 14 TAs and eight school leaders were interviewed across the 10 schools. School visits and interviews were carried out by four researchers.

Participant consent was collected before interviews took place, and the team used the same data collection tools across the schools to maintain consistency of approach and questions asked. Interviewees were asked about their experience of the programme and its training, and their perceptions of the effect of the intervention on pupil's reading skills, comprehension, and attitudes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Before analysis took place, meetings were held with all researchers to discuss their experiences and commonalities across the interview data; this helped to inform the coding and create headline codes.

The interviews were then coded inductively by two team members to identify patterns and recurring themes across schools. These researchers communicated regularly during this time and reviewed coding to ensure consensus. These themes and the related data were then reviewed by the full research team, again to ensure agreement, before being written up.

## A focus on TA perspectives

What became apparent to the research team was that TAs often described the REACH Primary intervention in terms of their relationships with individual children, developed through the one-to-one work and regular time dedicated to each child. Where TAs articulated impact, they spoke about this relationship in ways that highlighted a connection between improved reading and decoding skills and the child's confidence and self-efficacy. In addition, TAs reported how the confidence and self-efficacy that appeared to grow as the intervention sessions progressed extended into children's participation and confidence outside of the intervention and in some instances, into classroom life and in the home. What emerged as significant in what TAs reported was that the one-to-one relationship enabled TAs to provide an individualised programme based on their growing knowledge of the child, their reading targets, and their reading and other interests. We argue that these features may be significant features in supporting those who have experienced difficulty in learning to read.

We have termed the TAs' approaches to the intervention and its personalisation as *brokering* reading experiences, and the TAs we interviewed worked to provide a responsive, flexible, negotiated pedagogical relationship. It is the features of this one-to-one relationship that we discuss in the next section.

## Findings from transcript analysis and key themes

We drew on a variable-oriented approach to case analysis to analyze interviews, considering the relationships between themes and identifying broad patterns and recurring themes across the schools (Miles et al., 2019). The following themes reflect the ways in which TAs described their work with children and their perceptions of its impact:

- Personalisation: Responding to children's needs and interests
- Building relationships and trust
- Finding confidence in reading
- Finding confidence beyond the intervention sessions

## Personalisation

Responding to children's needs and interests.

Personalisation involved in-part focusing on the reading skills and strategies that children needed to practice, such as accurate decoding. Often, this was highlighted from the initial assessments and ongoing running record assessment stipulated in the programme. TAs often gained detailed insights into the child's strengths and difficulties and so were able to accommodate and support these through adapting activities and resources. This opportunity to personalise is exemplified in the following reflection:

*Some of the phonemes he just said he did not know. When we did the original test he did so many of them and then another one, "I don't know." He would not try it. I took that, so this is why we keep chipping in on stuff, so this is why I've gone back over "oy." (TA9)*

This responsiveness to, and prioritisation of, children's needs was also highlighted by one TA who described this as responding to 'what children want with you'. Time to talk about books was seen as important, but the timing of the session as a constraint on this focus. Interestingly, this was articulated as 'indulging' children:

*I don't want to take away time from that discussion around the book with her, because I do think that's important. I don't just want to say, 'That's okay, just read it then.' I think the discussions that children want with you, I think sometimes it takes it well over, if you really indulge them, it takes it well over the time limit. (TA1)*

Through the ongoing sessions, TAs were also able to find out about children's interests and preferences in terms of types of texts and were able to use this to support engagement.

*... he loves joke books, so instead of using that easy read at the beginning, I was finding joke books and we'd share a joke book together, or he'd read one and I'd read one. Just something so it's not we're going to sit down and we're going to read. (TA2)*

*Some [books] we've looked at, knowing the kids, and thought there's no point looking at that one. (TA2)*

TAs seemed very attuned to children's experiences of failure and were keen to avoid any perception of failure by the child during the intervention sessions. One TA noted the potential negative impacts of children's perception of failure. This TA explained how the baseline tests associated with the intervention

may have been demoralizing for those who struggled. With self-esteem in mind, TAs were sensitive to building a sense of achievement and adapting activities so that children could experience success, as described below:

*Depending on what she's found difficult in the text I might change my activity that I'm going to do with her, because if I think she's really struggled with something I might think well I'll not do what I'd planned to do. (TA5)*

TAs showed awareness and sensitivity towards children's sense of success, and how they were often focused on getting things 'correct' rather than actively focused on reading:

*They were so focused on how many words they'd got correct that when we were marking each time that they got something correct, they weren't concentrating as hard on what they were reading. They were looking over, they weren't continuing the flow of the story. (TA4)*

The TA below ensured there was time to focus on a particular book, rather than rush through the session and focus on two books:

*Mine were getting confused between the two books, so we tend to read a little bit longer on the instructional one, rather than do two different texts. (TA8)*

The above adaptations were made possible by the one-to-one delivery of the programme which facilitated adaptation of the programme and enabled the TAs to be responsive and build positive and trusting relationships with the children. As one TA noted:

*It's nice to work one-to-one with a child because you get to know them and they get to know you. (TA1)*

## Building relationships and trust

The ability to personalise content and build trusting relationships meant that TAs were able to work out how best to engage individuals, for example by using different voices.

*When we are doing the comprehension stuff, I actually took it to the extreme of reading in really extreme voices for each of the characters, almost ridiculously so, because I found that that would grab their attention. ... those two were riveted and they thought it was hilarious, and they listened properly. So just things like knowing your students. (TA12).*

Significantly, the majority of TAs interviewed observed the programme having a positive impact on children's engagement and interest in reading, children becoming increasingly motivated to read as the intervention progressed, and this leading to higher levels of self-esteem and confidence in their reading ability. TAs spoke about the conditions of the 'reading relationships' that developed and how the brokering of these by TAs enabled children to flourish. While in an above example we saw how a TA minimised a child's perception of 'getting something wrong', here we see a TA's use of humour to celebrate success in moving up programme levels:

*She's giddy because she's going on gold. When we say, "If you get this far with your prediction, you can move up twice, but get it wrong you're going down." They laugh because they know they'll never go down. It's just little rewards they're happy with. (TA5)*

It is possible that the nature of this interaction helps children to overcome their fear of 'going down' and their further lack of success with reading. Humour is used here to defuse this fear and to build trust. This exchange clearly illustrates how the one to one sessions have enabled a trusting relationship between the pupil and the TA to be built.

Making success and progress visible to children was also seen as important:

*It's nice for them to see on that list of books, it's nice to be able to say to them, Look you started on that one and now we're down here'. (TA4)*

### *Finding confidence in reading*

As reported, at the beginning of the programme, children were often reluctant to take part or join in the sessions and reading generally. However, this changed significantly as the programme progressed:

*One lad in my class would avoid reading at all costs but actually he enjoys coming to read with me. (TA1)*

*I know in the beginning when we started to take them at first it was "Urgh we are reading," whereas now it's "You haven't had me this week." So, they are more eager to come and read. (TA2)*

As the programme progressed, TAs reported that the children had benefited overall and had more confidence and interest in reading. TAs reported that children had more confidence and a willingness to 'have a go' with new and different texts, as well as being more interested in the books on offer:

*I think they have more confidence to have a go at reading a book that they would have before said, "That's too hard for me." I think they have the confidence to approach an unfamiliar word and at least have a go. (TA3)*

*I think overall it's been a really positive impact on the children in terms of their confidence and interest in reading. (TA14)*

The impact on confidence and interest was also related to children's self-esteem, self-perception as a reader and willingness to read aloud:

*It's definitely made them more confident. They don't think they're rubbish at reading any more. (TA4)*

*I think the kids really, really enjoyed it, and have benefited from it educationally and a bit of self-esteem. (TA14)*

### *Finding confidence beyond the intervention sessions*

A difference in willingness to engage in wider classroom activities and topics has also been observed in some children, perhaps indicating a shift in self-perception as a learner.

*We have one child who would barely read if you'd asked him in class to read out loud. He stood up at the front of the class and he actually led the rest of them. (TA7)* They're enjoying learning a lot more .... They're a lot more enthusiastic. Even if it is not with English or reading, some of them are flying at maths because they want to learn now .... You can see it in other areas. (TA3)

One TA spoke about a child with an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) who had previously been very quiet in school and had not been reading or attempting to blend words. Over the course of the programme the child had started to sight read and to write about what he had read, and use phonics to write longer words, and to use this in other lessons.

*they had some art project ... he'd got a list of things and there was ant, monkey, caterpillar, and he'd written these words ... these were all things out of a book he'd read with me ... he was saying he'd remembered these characters out of this book ... his confidence and his talking and writing, what comes out of him in that half an hour session we get has just been amazing. (TA8)*

For some pupils these increased levels of interest and engagement for reading had had an impact on their willingness to read at home:

*The first thing she said this morning was, 'I've read at home last night,' and it's actually like she wants to read at home now.* (TA13)

*He's started reading more now at home with Mum.* (TA5)

*I've got one child who didn't used to be heard at home and he is mithering his dad to death. "Will you hear me read? Will you sign my book?"* (TA10)

It is possible that the increase in confidence brought about by the intervention has shifted children's perceptions of self as a reader beyond the intervention sessions and provided them with the strategies and confidence to participate in reading in their classrooms and also at home. This shift in perception was facilitated by the responsive, flexible, and negotiated pedagogical relationships brokered by the TAs in the ways described above.

A senior leader articulated how, when selecting pupils from REACH, they had considered the benefits of the one-to-one relationship and the nature of this relationship in supporting those who had experienced challenges or a sense of 'failure' in learning to read.

*We picked a lot of children that almost really benefit from one-to-one time ... The benefits are mostly reading but it's also very pastoral as well.* (Senior Leader, School 8)

## Discussion

The brokering of reading relationships.

Our findings suggest that the one-to-one delivery, personalisation of learning, and fine-graded progression of REACH were significant features of the intervention which had a positive impact on children's reading. The one-to-one, regular nature of sessions enabled TAs to plan and tailor the intervention to the child's needs. (See also Culliney et al., 2021). The comprehensive training of TAs in diagnostic assessment and supporting reading came into play as they made pedagogical decisions. But this is only part of the story in what made it successful for some children.

From our observations of TAs and interviews with them, it was clear that other crucial dynamics were coming into play as TAs described the intervention in terms of their relationships with children, developed through the one-to-one work and regular time

dedicated to the child, and the ways in which they adapted the programme. We noted how TAs worked in a way that 'brokered' the intervention and its delivery in multiple ways. TAs' articulations of the way they worked described a series of *relationships*: the child's relationships to texts; the child's response to the individual activities that took place as part of the programme; and the child's relationships to their wider school experience of reading and classwork. TAs were able to provide an individualised programme based upon their knowledge of each child, their targets for development, and their reading and other interests.

It is this individualisation of the programme that facilitated the positive and reciprocal relationships that built skill, confidence, self-efficacy, and motivation. The array of strategies TAs used to secure children's interest, build positive relationships with them, and support reading skills permeates the ways in which the TAs articulated their role on the programme. Tasked with working with those who have experienced difficulties in reading and who may be reluctant to engage, it was necessary to manage relationships carefully. This involved flexibility, negotiation, and knowing when to challenge children and when to re-interpret, reframe, and adapt activities to support progression. As a result of this, reading skills, confidence, self-efficacy, and motivation were perceived to have increased as the programme progressed.

Overwhelmingly, during the interviews, TAs highlighted the positive impact of REACH Primary on children's self-esteem and motivation. This positive impact cannot be separated from TAs' growing confidence and feelings of autonomy in planning appropriate reading activities, based on their assessment of progress, along with their knowledge of and relationship with the child. The positive impact highlighted may be of particular significance for children who were reported to have a lack of confidence or self-esteem with respect to their reading efficacy and who lacked the confidence to talk about what they had read.

Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) state that motivation to read is linked to appropriate reading goals, perceptions of self-efficacy, and social motivation to read. The REACH Primary programme clearly offered opportunities for a range of dimensions of learning to read to take place. While the intervention was based primarily on the principles of the SVoR, it clearly allowed opportunity for flexible planning and personalisation, including the setting of appropriate goals that could be met. Our findings suggest further evidence of a 'virtuous cycle' of increased reading confidence through self-efficacy that enhances pupil reading motivation (Hempel-Jorgensen et al., 2018).

## Self-efficacy and motivation to engage in reading in broader social contexts

McBreen and Savage (2020a) claim that reading motivation can be enhanced where readers are instructed in self-regulation and where there is a focus on children's reading interests and importantly, in finding ways of changing children's mindset around their reading difficulty. Significantly, this shift in mindset around reading difficulty may be realised by the brokering of reading relationships described by TAs worked to change a child's perception of themselves as a reader and took particular care to protect them from further experiences of failure. Interestingly, one TA termed this as 'indulging' children. This protection and 'indulgence' are key features of the *brokering* that took place. This may in fact have been particularly significant to those children who were already seen as 'struggling readers', with the implications this status may have had on their self-esteem, sense of self as a reader and their motivation to read.

Of particular significance in our findings is that the strategies that TAs drew on in the sessions to encourage children's willingness to read focused on the social and affective aspects of learning to read. These features were acknowledged as critical in supporting and scaffolding children's experiences during the sessions. TAs were careful to ensure that the reading experience was 'safe' for children who had already experienced difficulties. The affective quality of the experience was handled with care and became a vital part of the 'virtuous cycle': the use of humour, sharing success, and activities that were delivered flexibly with a careful eye on children's responses, were essential. TAs frequently referred to how the increased confidence in one-to-one reading sessions had 'spilled over' into other school activities and participation in lessons, as well as a willingness to participate in reading at home. This again points to a virtuous cycle of increased self-efficacy and motivation, that increased willingness to engage in reading with a broader social circle. Without the increased self-efficacy, carefully nurtured by the TAs, these children often lacked the motivation or willingness to engage in reading in broader social contexts such as their own classrooms or at home.

### Limitations of the study

As described, the short-term and promising success of the programme, and some schools indicated that they would continue with REACH. What is not clear is whether the impact of the one-to-one work on pupil motivation and confidence was sustained beyond the

20-week programme. The time-limited nature of such funded interventions and associated evaluations raises concerns about approaches of this type, in that they do not account for any sustained involvement or increase in motivation and confidence beyond the evaluation period, making it impossible to know whether short-term effects were maintained.

As noted above, this research took place as part of an evaluation of the REACH programme. As a result, there has not been a longitudinal follow-up to assess whether schools have continued to use the REACH approach and materials, or if changes in TA practice or in pupils' engagement in reading and progress have been sustained beyond the life of the intervention.

As is generally the case with such qualitative work, our sample size was relatively small, meaning that it is reflective only of the schools visited and therefore the findings are unlikely to be generalisable. However, we did find evidence suggesting that increased self-efficacy in reading, promoted through positive reading relationships, could increase the tendency to engage with reading in wider circles and therefore contribute to the virtuous cycle of reading motivation, reading engagement, and gains in reading skills.

### Conclusions and recommendations

While the research in the article draws from a relatively small sample, it does offer an opportunity to examine the thoughts and experiences of TAs who had been specifically trained by the REACH programme on reading skills, along with the time and resources to support those struggling with reading. Our findings concur with those of Cremin et al. (2014) who suggested that work with children who have experienced difficulty in learning to read should be done in a way that is varied, responsive, and predominantly owned and shaped by the readers (Cremin et al., 2014). Furthermore, our findings suggest further evidence that an individual, responsive, and targeted approach which includes motivational and cognitive aspects of reading can shift the child's perception of themselves as a reader. This support may be best provided by an adult with whom the child can build a trusting and sustained relationship. Bandura (1997) highlighted how self-efficacy includes verbal persuasion and drew attention to physiological and affective states. These aspects of the support provided by TAs were salient within the interviews and prevalent when TAs were sharing their insights into children's levels of confidence and self-esteem.

Our findings align with a view of literacy as a social and cultural practice (Street, 1995), in which the affective climate, interactions, and materials that children

encounter in their literacy experiences shape the way in which literacy is felt and received by them. TA interview responses provide evidence that supports this view. The work of teachers, TAs, and parents is critical in ensuring that children are provided with positive reading experiences within a reading community where they can build a sense of self-efficacy, skill, and motivation. Learning to read is always contingent on the social, cultural, and affective climate of children's experiences and may be even more salient for those who have experienced reading difficulties. The affective quality of these experiences may be particularly significant for those who have experienced difficulty in reading and vital in supporting the shift in self-perception as a reader described by McBreen and Savage (2021). Our findings suggest that adhering to a 'one size fits all' approach to supporting readers may not be effective without such elements.

Any model of reading, such as the SVOR, cannot account for the complexity of events and human relationships that come together as a child becomes a reader and theoretical models of reading should not be implemented as such. Rigid adherence to policies and particular approaches that do not acknowledge the social and affective dimensions of reading may continue to undermine efforts in the teaching of reading. However, the REACH programme, involved targeted one-to-one work with TAs who had been trained in supporting weaker readers, provided with materials, and who had the flexibility to adapt the programme and personalise it to individual children. These things provided the ingredients for reading motivation and self-efficacy in reading to flourish. Central to this flourishing was the brokering of positive reading relationships between TAs and children that we observed and that were articulated to us during our field visits.

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## Conflict of Interest Statement

We declare that there are no conflicts of interest in this report.

## Data Availability Statement

Research data is not shared. The data is drawn from interviews with Teaching Assistants and formed part of the Implementation and Process Evaluation of an EEF Evaluation of REACH Primary.

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## Appendix 1: Interview schedules for TAs and school

*Questions for Teaching Assistant Interviews (post-observation).*

Please read this into the tape.

**We are gathering data to help us evaluate the REACH Primary intervention. This interview forms part of the evaluation. Any data collected today will be kept securely and will remain confidential. Only members of the evaluation team will have access to**

**the anonymised transcript. Use of the interview data for this evaluation or any research project or publication will ensure anonymity. You are welcome to withdraw this consent at any time during the interview and for up to 6 days afterwards.**

**Do you understand what I have told you and do you consent to the use of this interview for evaluation and publishing purposes?**

A How did that session compare to a typical session with that pupil?

B Were you able to achieve what you had planned?

### *Preparing to teach REACH Primary.*

4. Which of the training events and materials were most useful in preparing you to deliver REACH Primary?
5. How confident do you feel about conducting the baseline assessment and ongoing assessment, such as running records?
6. How did the initial training affect your ability to plan RI and OL sessions to meet the learning needs of pupils?
7. Did the assessments you conducted enable you to identify the right starting point for each pupil?

### *Delivering the programme—support materials.*

8. Can you tell me about how you personalize the programme to meet pupils' interests?
9. How have you found using the Hatcher grading system?
10. Which are the most useful REACH materials/handbook in helping you to plan appropriate activities for the pupil?
11. Are the suggested reading books graded appropriately for the pupils you work with?
12. How well do sound linkage materials help you plan appropriately for the pupil?
13. Are the oral language session materials effective for the pupils you teach?
14. How often are you able to deliver all components of the oral language session and the reading instruction session?

### *Delivering the programme- frequency and support.*

15. How easy/difficult has it been to deliver the three sessions in a typical week?
- 
- When have these been delivered?
16. Do you have a dedicated place and resources to deliver the intervention?
17. In what ways have senior leaders supported you in the delivery of REACH?

**Impact on pupils.**

18. So far, what impact has REACH had on pupils' reading skills?
19. So far, what impact has REACH had on pupil reading comprehension?
20. Have you noticed any change in pupil attitude to reading?
  - self-confidence, self-esteem, willingness.
21. Are there opportunities to share pupil success/learning on REACH?
  - with the child/with the class/the child's class teacher.

**Impact on your professional development/role in school.**

22. How has your involvement in the delivery of REACH primarily impacted on you personally and/or professionally?
  - role in school.
23. Professional knowledge and confidence.
  - planning for pupil progression.
  - understanding the reading process, including decoding and comprehension.
  - foundational skills for reading.
  - -challenges children face when learning to read.
  - -how to support language comprehension.

Is there anything else you would like to say about REACH Primary?

Please read this into the tape: **Thank you for your time.**

**School Leader Interview.**

*Questions for School Leaders Interviews.*  
Please read this into the tape.

**We are gathering data to help us evaluate the REACH Primary intervention. This interview forms part of the evaluation. Any data collected today will be kept securely and will remain confidential. Only members of the evaluation team will have access to the anonymised transcript. Use of the interview data for this evaluation or any research project or publication will ensure anonymity. You are welcome to withdraw this consent at any time during the interview and for up to 6 days afterwards.**

**Do you understand what I have told you and do you consent to the use of this interview for evaluation and publishing purposes?**

A Briefly, can you explain your role in school?

- 1 Prior to REACH Primary, which interventions did/do your school use to support weaker readers and how were/are these delivered?
- 2 What key approaches to the teaching of reading, including programmes and initiatives, do you currently use?
- 3 Are these approaches shared across schools/Academy Trust etc?
- 4 Did you attend the REACH introductory training day?
- 5 In what ways have you enabled the delivery of REACH Primary?
- 6 How have you shared REACH Primary with parents/staff across school?
- 7 How has REACH Primary been received by staff/parents and pupils at your school?
- 8 In which ways do TAs and Class Teachers share their knowledge of the progress in reading of pupils involved in the intervention?
- 9 So far, what benefits of your school's involvement in REACH Primary are you aware of, for example,
  - TA expertise and knowledge.
  - Pupil progress in reading.
  - pupil self- confidence.
  - pupil motivation.
  - Other impact.
- 10 Please explain any challenges/drawbacks of your school's involvement in REACH Primary (for example)
  - Pupil attendance.
  - Timetabling and scheduling.
  - TA confidence, expertise and knowledge.
  - Concurrence with existing practice in the teaching of reading.

Is there anything else you would like to say about REACH Primary?

Please read this into the tape: **Thank you for your time.**

**CONTACT THE AUTHORS**

Karen Daniels, Sheffield Hallam University, UK.  
email: [k.daniels@shu.ac.uk](mailto:k.daniels@shu.ac.uk)

Josephine Booth, Sheffield Hallam University,  
Sheffield, UK

Jemma Monkhouse, Sheffield Hallam University,  
Sheffield, UK